

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

In the evolving landscape of education, the quest to enhance student learning outcomes has led to an increased focus on understanding the factors contributing to effective academic learning. Among these factors, the educational philosophy of humanism and the availability of physical resources have emerged as critical components influencing student learning engagement and academic performance (Estrada et al., 2021; Mincu et al., 2024). The rationale behind this study stems from the need to explore how these elements, individually and collectively, impact the student's academic performance, particularly in diverse contexts such as China's rapidly changing educational environment.

Academic performance reflects how well students achieve their educational goals through various indicators like grades, test scores, and overall academic achievements (Lynam et al., 2024). It is a crucial metric that influences future opportunities, including access to higher education and career prospects. Academic performance also impacts students' self-esteem and motivation, with high achievement fostering confidence and a greater engagement in learning (Sadler, 2009). Conversely, poor performance can reduce motivation and disengagement, affecting long-term educational outcomes (Johnson & Mercado-Garcia, 2022; Smith et al., 2023). Academic performance is vital for students and a critical measure for educational institutions to evaluate and enhance their

teaching methods and support services (Abbas, 2020). It plays a significant role in the selection processes for scholarships, college admissions, and job placements, making it a critical determinant of a student's future success (Zughoul et al., 2018). There is also a growing emphasis on a holistic view of academic performance that includes critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration, reflecting the evolving demands of the modern world (Johnson et al., 2023).

Numerous studies have explored the factors influencing academic performance (Fenollar et al., 2007; Hanaysha et al., 2023; Johnson & Street, 2012). For instance, Johnson and Street (2012) examined the role of socioeconomic status and found that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds generally perform better academically due to better access to educational resources. Additionally, Hanaysha et al. (2023) highlighted the impact of parental involvement on students' academic achievements, suggesting that active parental participation in a child's education can significantly boost academic performance. Research by Fenollar et al. (2007) also emphasized the importance of learning environments, indicating that well-structured and resourceful settings contribute to higher academic outcomes. Despite these insights, gaps remain in understanding the nuanced relationships between various educational inputs and academic performance.

This study focuses on operationalizing humanism's philosophy into actionable strategies that enhance the learning process. This research introduces novel pedagogical frameworks, including project-based learning, empathy-driven collaborative tasks, and self-reflective goal-setting exercises that align with

humanistic principles. These frameworks emphasize fostering student autonomy, critical thinking, and emotional well-being, bridging the gap between humanism as a theoretical concept and its practical application in classrooms. This integration addresses cognitive aspects of learning and prioritizes emotional and social dimensions, creating a more comprehensive educational experience. By exploring these methods, the study aims to establish humanism as a transformative tool for enhancing learning engagement and academic performance.

Furthermore, it is essential to consider humanism as another critical component influencing student learning engagement and academic performance (Gallardo et al., 2021; Walukow et al., 2023). Humanism is a philosophical approach that emphasizes human beings' inherent value and agency, both individually and collectively. In education, humanism focuses on the holistic development of students, addressing not only their cognitive abilities but also their emotional, social, and ethical growth (Javadi & Tahmasbi, 2020; Nápoles Prieto et al., 2023). This approach advocates for nurturing self-actualization, encouraging students to realize their full potential by fostering critical thinking and personal development. Maslow (1943), a key proponent of humanistic psychology, argued that education should prioritize the development of the whole person, moving beyond mere academic achievement to cultivate a genuine love for learning and self-improvement. By shifting the focus from rote memorization to more meaningful educational experiences, humanistic education aims to empower students to become well-rounded individuals (Quintero & Wang, 2023).

Humanism in education is particularly relevant as a response to the mechanistic and authoritarian approaches that have traditionally dominated many educational systems, including those in China. These traditional methods often emphasize discipline, conformity, and the memorization of facts, which can stifle creativity and personal growth. In contrast, humanistic education seeks to create learning environments that respect individual differences and encourage personal expression (Omodan & Mtshatsha, 2022). Qin (2022) highlights the growing interest in integrating humanistic principles within Chinese education to balance the demands of academic rigor with the need for emotional and social development. However, cultural perceptions of humanism in China can influence its acceptance and implementation. Chinese culture's collectivist and hierarchical nature may create resistance to humanistic approaches that prioritize individual autonomy and self-expression over collective goals. Such cultural barriers might lead to biased responses or limited engagement with humanistic strategies. To mitigate these challenges, tailored strategies, such as integrating humanistic practices with traditional Confucian values that emphasize moral education and societal harmony, could bridge the cultural divide. Explicitly linking humanistic methods to these culturally valued principles may enhance their acceptance and effectiveness in Chinese classrooms. This shift reflects a broader global trend towards more student-centered learning approaches prioritizing students' well-being and holistic development, suggesting a potential paradigm shift in how education is conceptualized and delivered (Brown et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2023).

Research on humanism in education has consistently highlighted its potential benefits, particularly in fostering a more engaging and motivating learning environment (Al-Obaydi, 2023; Qin, 2022; Saptono et al., 2023; Sharp, 2012). A seminal study by Al-Obaydi (2023) demonstrated that students in humanistic learning settings exhibit higher levels of motivation and engagement, primarily due to the emphasis on personal growth and the development of self-worth. These environments prioritize students' emotional and psychological well-being, enhancing their academic commitment and overall satisfaction with the learning process. This approach contrasts with traditional educational models, offering a more holistic and student-centered perspective that has yielded positive outcomes in various contexts (Johnson et al., 2023). However, implementing humanism in education is challenging, particularly in cultures with solid authoritarian traditions. For instance, Qin (2022) found that while applying humanistic principles in Chinese schools improved student-teacher relationships and fostered a more supportive classroom atmosphere, these benefits were sometimes limited by cultural norms prioritizing discipline and conformity. Saptono et al. (2023) also pointed out that integrating humanistic practices can be challenging in such contexts due to potential conflicts with established educational practices. As a result, more research is needed to explore how humanism can be effectively integrated into various educational systems, especially in regions where traditional values may conflict with the principles of humanistic education. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing

strategies to incorporate humanism into diverse educational settings (Javadi & Tahmasbi, 2020; Walukow et al., 2023).

Moreover, another crucial factor is physical educational resources, which include the tangible assets required for effective teaching and learning, such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and technological tools (Peng et al., 2022). This study treats physical resources as independent variables directly influencing students' learning engagement and academic performance. These resources are crucial in shaping the educational experience and influencing student engagement and academic outcomes (Liu et al., 2023). Adequate physical resources ensure that students have a conducive environment for learning, which can enhance their ability to focus, participate, and perform academically. As highlighted by Hanaysha et al. (2023), the quality and availability of these resources can directly impact the overall learning atmosphere, affecting not only academic performance but also the motivation and well-being of students. For instance, well-maintained classrooms with appropriate lighting, seating, and ventilation create a physical environment that supports sustained concentration and active participation. Additionally, access to modern libraries and up-to-date laboratories allows students to explore subjects more deeply, facilitating a richer understanding of the material and fostering critical thinking skills (Kolesnykova, 2019).

Studies consistently show a positive correlation between physical resources and academic performance (Angila, 2008; Sam-Kalagbor, 2021). For example, Sam-Kalagbor (2021) found that well-equipped classrooms and modern facilities are associated with higher student engagement and better academic

results. Similarly, research by Angila (2008) highlighted that schools with adequate physical resources provide a more stimulating learning environment, which helps students' cognitive and emotional development. However, disparities in resource allocation, especially between urban and rural schools, remain a significant challenge, impacting the quality of education and academic performance across different regions (Greenwald et al., 1996).

Additionally, learning engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, and interest students exhibit in their learning activities (Wong & Liem, 2022). It is a critical determinant of academic success, as engaged students are more likely to absorb information, develop critical thinking skills, and achieve higher academic outcomes (Fredricks et al., 2004). Various factors, including the learning environment, teaching methods, and the availability of resources, can influence engagement. According to Jelas et al. (2016), when students are intrinsically motivated and find their learning activities meaningful, they are more likely to engage deeply with the material, leading to better academic performance. Moreover, the quality of teacher-student interactions and supportive peer relationships also play significant roles in fostering engagement, as these social factors contribute to a positive learning climate that encourages active participation and perseverance in educational tasks (Liu et al., 2023).

Moreover, the literature on the student's learning engagement in education is widely discussed (Brown et al., 2022; Peng et al., 2022). For instance, Brown et al. (2022) did a longitudinal study on the effect of self-determination theory on students, and the study found that students who received the theory's strength of

autonomy, competence, and relatedness were highly motivated to engage in learning. Moreover, Peng et al. (2022) pointed out that the students who seem more involved in their activities would achieve higher academic results and demonstrate better persistence in their classes. Also, Fredricks (2022) noted that engagement is a complex concept with behaviour, effect, and cognition critical to student achievement. Nevertheless, the social integration of humanistic education, physical assets, and learning participation has been paid less attention, especially in Chinese education. If these factors were delineated, there might be a further understanding of how the learning environments that can be conducive to boosting learners' engagement and achievements in their learning contexts might be designed.

In prior research attempting to illustrate the importance of humanism to learning engagement, the idea of our educational climate has been stressed—specifically, one involved in students' emotions and ethical progress (Hanrahan, 2002; Tangney, 2014; Torrisi-Steele, 2022). For example, Maslow (1943) study demonstrated that educational environments based on humanistic theories can enhance students' motivation and learning. This approach fosters a favorable learning environment because they are listened to, accepted, and appreciated, making them more focused on learning activities. Since humanism is aimed at students' all-round development, it contributes to a more individual and humane approach to teaching and helps students relate to the subject matter more personally (Sengupta et al., 2020). It effectively maintains motivation and supports the learners' engagement in the learning process (Tangney, 2014). This

is supported by Khilji (2022), who stated that the positive humanistic concepts in Chinese schools enhanced pleasant relationships between students and teachers and a favorable class climate. This is important as it helps bring out interaction in learning and encourages dialogue, courtesy, and incorporation of society in learning among the learning community. Furthermore, these principles help provide the rightful educational environment, which engages and comprehends the multiplicity of students' demands, as is often the case in multicultural and diverse learning environments. However, despite the research focusing on the humanistic approach to improving the educational process and how students engage, the pathways through which humanism affects engagement, especially in diverse education, are still undefined (Crone et al., 2022; Wittenberg et al., 2024). More studies should be conducted to identify how the principles above can be best applied across different educational systems and cultures to enhance students' engagement and learning achievements (Hanrahan, 2002).

The effectiveness of humanism on academic performance has, in some way, been an area of study with diverse opinions (Chukwunyere, 2015; Gallardo et al., 2021; Mayoral et al., 2021). According to Bandura (1977), children who get an education by applying humanist learning theories and principles that make them love learning will improve their scores. It empowers students to take responsibility for their learning and increases their interest in learning, improving their performance (Mayoral et al., 2021). In contrast to other methods, humanism integrates students' growth, progressing into emotionally and socially fully-developed people. Thus, people desire to succeed in their studies, and necessary

learning students work under the conditions created by this model (Gallardo et al., 2021). Consequently, the effect of humanism on performance can be more or less when adopted in a particular cultural and educational system. For example, Chukwunyere (2015) explains that humanism could be less effective in cultures that support authoritarian solid traditions like China's. This might be a result of tension that may emanate from conventional teaching and learning practices, which may depict authority and order, setting against the principles of humanism that are liberal and, therefore, open to free self-actualization (Mayoral et al., 2021). Nevertheless, contextual difficulties as mentioned above are numerous; still, the humanistic approach of developing the whole student, including his or her intellectual, emotional, and psychosocial aspects, indicates that the humanistic principles, if applied with certain modifications, would have the probable of enhancing academic performance due to the enhanced students' interest, motivation, and wholesome development (Vankova, 2020). More research should be conducted to determine how aspects of humanism can be implemented in various school environments to have an optimal impact on students' performance.

Physical resources such as furniture, classrooms, libraries, and technologies are essential facets of learning resources as they play a large part in defining the learning process and significantly affect students' experiences (Bevans et al., 2010; Mestry & Bodalina, 2015). Studies have found that only equipped learning environments improve students' engagement. For instance, Goldberg et al. (2022) conducted a study and noted that young people in areas endowed with resources are more likely to display fatigue-free, willing

participants in learning. Such environments offer the means and a setting that includes the delivery of the conventional form of learning that also accommodates the adoption of creative approaches that foster student engagement. In this regard, current instructional materials like updated libraries and proper technological equipment allow students to get more information and resources to enhance their learning experience in line with current changes (Haleem et al., 2022). However, the inequitable distribution of resources whereby developed regions, specifically urban areas, are endowed with more resources than the less developed regions, particularly the rural regions, remains a significant concern in ensuring that similar results are achieved across different educational institution types. According to Valtonen et al. (2021), this is true because modern facilities and resources help make the environment charged enough to engage the students in learning. However, schools in these regions or located in rural areas or schools that may not have adequate funding will sometimes lack adequate resources to use in the teaching and learning process, which may lead to poor student interest and, thus, poor performance. Such differences mean that more emphasis should be directed towards fairness in the distribution of resources for learning so that every learner in the world's nations, whichever geographic region he belongs to, has the physical requirements for learning adequately provided (Blaschke et al., 2021). It is inexplicable why these gaps should prevail despite the advancements made in learning to allow all students an equal chance to access quality education and fully embrace their education (Johnson et al., 2023).

Various literature shows how physical resources positively affect students' performance and achievement (Ferriz-Valero et al., 2020; Lima et al., 2020). For example, adequate physical resources lead to improvement in performance. Ferriz-Valero et al. (2020) proved that students who perform in well-cleaned classes, well-equipped laboratories, and state-of-the-art and well-stocked libraries record improved academic performance. The nature of learning afforded by these resources allows students to concentrate better on their lessons, interact with the materials, and be involved in practical activities that enhance their comprehension of what is taught (Hofer et al., 2021). Furthermore, these resources ensure that learning is more sectional and organized – which is critical to success academically (Smith et al., 2023). Similarly, Lima et al. (2020) build on the fact that the physical adequacy of school infrastructure promotes cognitive development and enhances learners' emotional well-being, influencing their academic performance. A resourceful environment helps to alleviate stress and anxiety because a student is likely to develop in a comfortable environment (Peters & Penna, 2020). However, physical resources do not affirmatively dictate proportions of academic performance and may be conditional on other factors, including SES and regional differences. These variations imply that although physical resources are essential, these resource commodities may be conditioned by other contextual considerations and that there is more to be learned concerning the existing dynamics (Mestry & Bodalina, 2015).

While the literature on humanism, physical resources, and the influence of individual physical resources on learning engagement and academic performance

has been well documented, many areas of study remain unidentified (Bevans et al., 2010; Javadi & Tahmasbi, 2020; Khilji, 2022). However, there are some omissions in the literature; mainly, there are no extensive empirical research results concerning the influence of humanism and the availability of physical resources on academic performance with learning engagement as an intermediate index. While numerous studies discussed the positive results of humanistic educational methods and well-equipped learning environments in isolation, the combined effect of both and their reciprocal impact on achievements has been discussed inadequately (Al-Obaydi, 2023; Bevans et al., 2010). Much of the earlier research looks at these elements independently or within a specific context; thus, there is a lack of knowledge on how they complement each other toward improving the students' success (Ferriz-Valero et al., 2020; Johnson & Street, 2012; Khilji, 2022). This study seeks to contribute to this gap by using a research study to explore how humanism, physical resources, and learning engagement affect and interact to impact students' performance. Attempting to combine these variables, this research aims to construct a more inclusive model that can explain the usage of context variables in China's diversified educational environment and would provide valuable insights for enhancing educational practices and resource management to gain better academic results. Familiarity with such relations is essential, mainly when working in schools and colleges; therefore, differing resource frameworks and pedagogy dispositions can be essential. The results may be helpful to policymakers and teachers who work towards enhancing students' academic achievement and learners' emotional health.

The urgency of this study is based on its evident importance to enhance understanding of the factors that influence learning in today's contexts. As Chinese educational practices respond to global changes, it is essential to understand better the relationships between humanism, physical resources, and learning engagement. Given the dynamic nature of the learning requirements as affected by technology and developments in learning pedagogy, it is essential to map the link between the components and students' performance. Therefore, this investigation's objectives include: This research seeks to contribute positively to the existing literature/knowledge base and strengthen our current knowledge of how educational settings can be more optimal for enhanced learning and tutorial engagement. Besides the theoretical advances argued for in this study, this work provides methodological objectives of possible significance to educators and policymakers. In light of these perceived influential factors laid out in this study, educators, policymakers, and any other person interested in improving teaching and learner outcomes in different contexts will be in the vantage position to design and deploy adequate strategies for improvement. Through action research, such insights could help create learning environments to enhance the student's success, especially in a culturally and technologically dynamic country like the People's Republic of China. The significance of the contextual relationship between humanism, physical resources, and engagement in the study directs the development of policies that will improve educational effectiveness for better students' well-being and empower them for local and global challenges.

## 1.2 Research Gaps

While humanistic approaches in education are globally recognized for their potential to foster holistic student development, a considerable gap exists in understanding their practical application, particularly in student engagement within Chinese educational institutions (Ali & Snowden, 2019). Although some studies touch on aspects of student management, there is a lack of focused research exploring how humanistic principles enhance student engagement, a critical factor in active learning environments (Ming-te et al., 2021). Moreover, existing literature often overlooks the impact of humanistic approaches on individual learning processes and academic performance (Al-Obaydi, 2023; Korostenskiene, 2022; Walukow et al., 2023). While humanism emphasizes the development of the whole person, the specific outcomes of these practices on students' academic achievements, particularly within the unique socio-cultural framework of China, are under-explored (Wang et al., 2023). This gap is significant as it leaves unanswered questions about the effectiveness of humanistic methods in improving academic performance.

In this regard, the last critical area that seems to be understudied is the part physical resources play in the student's learning process and results. While physical resources are recognized as parts of the educational context, their effects on how students access the content of learning materials or on academic performance are not well studied (Scholl et al., 2014). This relationship is essential to comprehend, especially if there is a disparity of resources in an institution such as a school. In addition, there is still much to learn about how

Chinese learners' physical or tangible resources interact with, contribute to, or moderate individual learning outcomes. Although resources should be sufficient to aid learning, the degree to which these bear any relationship to climbing the performance ladder or improving student engagement has not yet been well-researched (Fadol et al., 2018). Addressing this gap could provide valuable insights into how resources can be optimized to improve educational outcomes.

Finally, the relationship between student engagement and academic performance, though often cited as necessary, lacks empirical backing in Chinese education. Despite the acknowledged importance of engagement in fostering academic success, the direct effects of increased engagement on students' academic achievements have not been sufficiently studied (Vora & Kainzbauer, 2020). Filling this gap could lead to more effective strategies for enhancing academic performance through improved engagement practices. This study seeks to bridge these gaps by comprehensively analyzing how humanistic approaches and physical resources influence student engagement and academic performance in China. Doing so aims to contribute valuable insights to the academic community and educational practitioners, ultimately supporting the development of more effective and inclusive educational strategies.

### **1.3 Problem Identification**

The changing nature of education, especially in the setting of fast changing educational system in China, has brought an urgent concern to establish the many faceted factors that can lead to the academic success of the students. Although much has been done to support the development of educational infrastructure, as

well as pedagogical changes, the issues of maximizing student learning results (PLR) persist, and academic performance is still not consistent in relation to various regions, types of schools, and groups of students (Lynam et al., 2024; Zughoul et al., 2018). Such inconsistency leads to fundamental concerns of the efficiency of the existing educational methods and the degree to which the educational methods meet the comprehensive developmental needs of the students. Although academic achievement is a key indicator of educational achievement and success and future prospects of students such as access to higher education or scholarship opportunities and career opportunities, the factors that reliably predict and improve performance have not been fully comprehensible, especially in the non-Western educational settings (Johnson & Mercado-Garcia, 2022; Sadler, 2009). The issue is further intensified by the acknowledgement that performance in academics is not only dependent on cognitive skills or conventional method of instruction. Modern studies in the field of education are turning to the realization that the emotional well-being of students, their social growth, and quality of learning settings are equally important determinants of academic success (Brandt et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2021). Nonetheless, the education systems, which in the past were more focused on the results of examination and memorization of material, which are the key features of Chinese education, might be poorly equipped to support these dimensions of development at large (Ma & Bennett, 2021). This conflict between academic rigor and holistic student development has been especially acute in China, where recent policy initiatives, including the so-called Double Reduction policy, can be seen as evidence of increasing awareness

of the necessity to reduce academic pressure and more balanced approaches to education (Tang and Zhu, 2024; Zhang, 2023b). However, the way these policy intentions are translated into effective classroom practices is a problem, and educators are not provided with clear guidelines on how they can meet the cognitive, emotional, and social needs of students and ensure the academic quality at the same time.

Humanistic education theory based on the inherent dignity of students, learners and holistic development presents potential solutions to these problems (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1961, 1969). These strategies focus on student-centered learning settings, independence facilitation, and emotional and social growth and academic success (Javadi and Tahmasbi, 2020; Napoles Prieto et al., 2023). Empirical data applied to the Western setting proves that humanistic education practices contribute to the increased motivation, engagement, and satisfaction of students with the learning process as a whole (Al-Obaydi, 2023; Reeve, 2012; Roorda et al., 2011). Nevertheless, the relevance and efficiency of these methods in the context of the Chinese unique socio-cultural environment is not properly examined. The Chinese educational culture, which is collectivistic, where the respect to the authority is important, and where the success in examinations is valued highly, can be a source of resistance to the humanistic principles in which the individual autonomy and self-expression are paramount (Fu et al., 2023; Qu, 2024). The described cultural disconnect is a serious issue: teachers, who want to use humanistic strategies, might face opposition on the part of students, parents,

and administrators, who are more used to the traditional pedagogical practices, which can restrain the success of the given intervention.

At the same time, the contribution of physical resources to the development of educational outcomes is another aspect of the issue that should be researched. China has already made tremendous investments in education facilities, but there are still high differences between urban and rural schools, wealthy and poor areas, and well-financed and poorly resourced ones (Liu et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2021). These resource inequities are reported to have significant impacts on student engagement and academic achievement where students in well-resourced schools consistently have a higher performance than those in under-resourced environments (Barrett et al., 2015; Greenwald et al., 1996; Sam-Kalagbor, 2021). Nevertheless, the pathways by which the physical possessions determine academic performances are only hypothetically underdeveloped. Although it is intuitively possible that contemporary laboratories, libraries with a solid collection of resources, and technology can support the learning process, routes linking these items to student engagement and, eventually, academic performance have to be investigated systematically (Bevans et al., 2010; Hanaysha et al., 2023). Moreover, the relationship between physical resources and humanistic education methods has had little studies. Perhaps resource-intensive settings can support the greater application of humanistic pedagogies, or vice versa, humanistic practices can partially overcome resource scarcity by making students feel motivated and interested in learning even in the least favorable environmental conditions. The knowledge of such interactive effects is critical in

designing holistic improvement strategies in education, although little has been done in the extant literature. The concept of learning as a multidimensional construct that includes behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects of learning (Fredricks et al., 2004) is a highly important mediating process according to which inputs in the form of educational activities are converted into the outcomes in academic performance. Active learners show a higher level of persistence, deeper process of information processing, and more positive attitudes towards studying that will lead to better academic outcomes (Jelas et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2020). The theoretical literature defines engagement as a proximal determinant of achievement, which mediates the contextual factors (including physical resources) and pedagogical strategies (including humanistic practices) on student outcomes (Fredricks, 2022; Wong and Liem, 2022). Nevertheless, the empirical studies of this mediation model are scarce especially in educational settings outside the Western world. The degree to which engagement is a mediating factor between humanistic practices and physical assets and academic achievement in Chinese schools has not been systematically addressed and this is one of the major gaps in the literature that limits the theoretical advancement as well as the design of the intervention.

The combination of these problems the weak knowledge of humanistic approaches in Chinese educational settings, insufficient developer of the mechanisms between physical resources and outcomes, and insufficient analysis of engagement as an indicator of mediation make an interesting study problem. The Chinese educational stakeholders such as the policymakers, the school

administrators and the classroom teachers are left with a challenging process of making decisions in resource allocation and their teaching methods with no exhaustive evidence on how effective they are and how they operate to impact student achievement. The given knowledge gap is especially consequential in the light of the current educational reforms in China and the growing focus on the comprehensive development of students, in addition to their academic performance (Qin, 2022; Ye, 2024). Unless it is carefully empirically examined that the interaction between humanistic approaches and physical resources can impact engagement and performance, the attempts to enhance the quality of education will be isolated and can be ineffective. In addition, the lack of combined research that studies these variables together is also a lost chance to develop the theory. Current research has usually focused on humanistic approaches, physical resources, and learning engagement separately, which does not allow analyzing their effects or their interactive relationships (Al-Obaydi, 2023; Bevans et al., 2010; Ferriz-Valero et al., 2020). Such a disjointed methodology prevents the insight of how education systems can maximize the simultaneous and multi-faceted inputs to maximize the outcomes of students. Examples include schools spending a lot of money on physical infrastructure but not focusing on pedagogical strategies that help establish engagement or vice versa through humanistic pedagogical strategies applied in a school where insufficient physical facilities disenfranchise the strategies. It is important to know how much of a contribution each factor has and how they would interact with

each other in order to create consistent, evidence-based strategies to improve education.

The pressing nature of solving this research problem is explained by the fact that educational issues of the day are dynamic. The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted the changes towards technology-mediated learning and emphasized the role of student engagement in remote and hybrid learning settings (Hofer et al., 2021; Hollister et al., 2022). Such changes have led to the importance of comprehending what keeps students engaged as more of an issue than ever before. At the same time, an increasing interest in student mental health issues and the drawbacks of a strictly examination-based education has provided policy space to change education in China and other countries (Ozer and Schwartz, 2020; Zhao et al., 2023). Evidence-based research about effective strategies to support engagement as well as achievement can be used to guide these efforts at reform and provide contributions to building more balanced and effective educational systems. Overall, the gap that this study aims to fill can be characterized as the intersection of many other gaps in the research and practice of education: the fact is that little empirical research has been conducted on humanistic practices in Chinese educational settings; the inadequacy of specification of the mechanisms that could connect physical resources and student outcomes; the lack of research that could integrate efficacy of these factors in promoting academic performance. To solve this issue, the thorough investigation is to be conducted, along with examining humanistic approaches, physical resources, engagement in learning, and academic performance of people in the cohesive analytical framework. This

kind of investigation can be used to present evidence in order to inform the educational policy and practice as well as in informing the theoretical knowledge on how educational inputs lead to student outcomes. The current research addresses this requirement by using structural equation modeling to investigate how these variables relate with each other, with special focus on how learning engagement is mediating the relationships between these variables in the Chinese learning setting.

#### 1.4 Research Questions

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- Q1: Is there any significant impact of the humanistic approach toward learning engagement?
- Q2: Is there any significant impact of physical resources towards learning engagement?
- Q3: Is there any significant impact of a humanistic approach towards academic performance?
- Q4: Is there any significant impact of physical resources towards academic performance?
- Q5: Is there any significant impact of learning engagement towards academic performance?
- Q6: Is there any significant impact of the humanistic approach towards academic performance with learning engagement as the intervening variable?
- Q7: Is there any significant impact of physical resources towards academic performance with learning engagement as the intervening variable?

## 1.5 Research Objectives

RO1: To analyze the effect of the humanistic approach on learning engagement.

RO2: To analyze the effect of physical resources on learning engagement.

RO3: To examine the effect of the humanistic approach on academic performance.

RO4: To examine the effect of physical resources on academic performance.

RO5: To investigate the effect of learning engagement on academic performance.

RO6: To analyze the effect of the humanistic approach on academic performance, with learning engagement as the intervening variable.

RO7: To analyze the effect of physical resources on academic performance, with learning engagement as the intervening variable.

## 1.6 Definition of Terms

To ensure clarity and alignment with the study's objectives, all variables are defined conceptually, based on relevant theories and literature, and operationally, detailing how they will be measured within this research.

### 1. Humanistic Approach

**Conceptual Definition:** The humanistic approach emphasizes holistic student development, fostering critical thinking, emotional well-being, and personal growth. It promotes student-centered learning through empathy, respect, and active participation, encouraging intrinsic motivation and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1983).

**Operational Definition:** The humanistic approach will be measured using a twelve-item scale that assesses teachers' practices fostering communication, personal growth, and emotional engagement. Responses will be collected via a seven-point Likert scale. The instrument synthesizes insights from Gage and Berliner (1986), Kaplan (2003), Tam (2000), Milheim (2015), and Windschitl (2002). Example items include, "The teacher regularly engages in meaningful, two-way communication with students" and "The classroom environment encourages open dialogue and respects diverse perspectives."

## 2. Physical Resources

**Conceptual Definition:** Physical resources include tangible educational assets essential for teaching and learning, such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories, technological tools, and infrastructure. These resources provide the foundation for an effective and inclusive learning environment (Greenwald et al., 1996).

**Operational Definition:** Physical resources will be assessed using a ten-item scale to evaluate their availability, adequacy, and maintenance. A seven-point Likert scale will be employed for data collection. Items are adapted from Greenwald et al. (1996), such as "The school provides sufficient and up-to-date textbooks and learning materials" and "Classrooms are equipped with modern technological tools, such as projectors and computers."

### 3. Learning Engagement

**Conceptual Definition:** Learning engagement refers to students' involvement in academic activities, encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. It reflects students' level of effort, interest, and curiosity in their learning processes (Fredricks et al., 2004).

**Operational Definition:** Learning engagement will be measured using a three-dimensional scale (affective, cognitive, and behavioral) with items adapted from Jelas et al. (2016). Each dimension consists of tailored items assessed via a seven-point Likert scale.

### 4. Academic Performance

**Conceptual Definition:** Academic performance reflects the degree to which students achieve their educational goals, typically evaluated through grades, test scores, and skill mastery. It encompasses both quantitative achievements and qualitative self-assessments of academic success (Fenollar et al., 2007).

**Operational Definition:** Academic performance will be assessed using a twelve-item scale adapted from Fenollar et al. (2007), employing a seven-point Likert scale. Example items include, "I consistently complete all my assignments on time" and "I perform well on exams and quizzes."

#### 1.7 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value in enhancing student growth by examining the effectiveness of humanistic approaches in student management. Educators can refine their practices to create positive learning environments by

understanding how these approaches influence psychological outcomes. The insights gained from this research will be precious for teachers, administrators, and educational practitioners, offering practical strategies to improve student management and foster closer teacher-student interactions. The findings can also guide professional development programs, helping educators better support students' mental well-being and overall development.

The study provides critical evidence for policymakers to inform the development of guidelines and policies incorporating humanistic principles in student management. These insights could lead to the modernization of China's education system, with a stronger focus on student-centred practices that mitigate psychological issues such as stress and anxiety. By addressing these challenges, the study aims to contribute to a healthier educational environment that supports students' mental health and academic success.

Moreover, this research fills a gap in existing educational literature by exploring the relationship between humanistic student management practices and psychological outcomes. The findings are expected to stimulate further academic discussion and research, contributing to a broader understanding of differentiated pedagogy that caters to individual learners' needs. The global relevance of this study lies in its potential to influence educational practices beyond China, promoting student-centred and psychologically supportive learning environments worldwide. Finally, the significance of this study lies in its potential to improve educational practices, enhance the well-being of students, and encourage a shift

away from authoritarian approaches in school environments toward more humanistic and supportive models.

